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ABSTRACT

Emma Dearborn originated the Speedwriting Alphabetic Shorthand in 1924. The system became well known in 1928 when it became the first shorthand system publicized for dual use in verbatim recording and selected notetaking. For the next 50 years, speedwriting was marketed in a franchise arrangement with proprietary schools. It became available to both secondary and postsecondary public schools for the first time in the 1970s. The feasibility of teaching speedwriting for purposes of verbatim recording in a one-year course or for purposes of notetaking in a half-year course is well proved. Historically, symbol shorthand instruction has been characterized by high failure, high dropout, and low achievement rates. After adopting the speedwriting system, however, many instructors report a doubling of their student retention rates. Moreover, most are quite pleased with the competencies their students develop. Because of the wealth of supportive materials that now exist for teachers wanting to switch from teaching symbol shorthand to speedwriting, the problems of switching are minimal. The speedwriting principles text contains only 36 theory lessons and 6 review/reinforcement lessons. The system is flexible, adaptable to various formats, and gives full attention to language arts and vocabulary building. An additional set of 60 dictation/transcription lessons covering 12 areas of business is also available for advanced study. Speedwriting has been well received by educators and employers alike. (MN)

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SPEEDWRITING--THE PROVEN ONE-YEAR SHORTHAND SYSTEM
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SPEEDWRITING Alphabetic Shorthand originated in 1924 when Emma Dearborn, an eminent symbolic shorthand teacher, decided even at that time, there had to be a better way. Thus, Ms. Dearborn devised SPEEDWRITING--a system of shorthand based on familiar letters of the alphabet. She found that the familiarity of the longhand alphabet reduced learning difficulty and learning time. Reading and transcription of notes was more accurate because the notes are derivatives of already familiar longhand. Ms. Dearborn's shorthand system gained international publicity when she trained Admiral Byrd's expedition to the Antarctic in 1928 to take research notes in SPEEDWRITING. This was the first time anyone had publicized a dual use of shorthand--for verbatim recording and for selected notetaking.

For the next 50 years, SPEEDWRITING was marketed in a franchise arrangement with proprietary schools who have used it, and still do, to successfully train thousands and thousands of secretaries. It was not until the 1970's, however, that SPEEDWRITING Shorthand was available to both the secondary and post-secondary schools. SPEEDWRITING, today, is a highly polished and refined system. A major revision of the system was done in 1984 by Dr. Joe Pullis, Louisiana Tech University. Dr. Pullis is well known for his extensive shorthand research, over 100 published articles on shorthand, and his skill as a shorthand teacher.

Dr. Pullis' SPEEDWRITING Regency Edition is the first shorthand system to be controlled on seven critical variables, thereby monitoring the difficulty of the dictation material from one lesson to the next. The

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variables controlled are standard shorthand words, actual words, brief forms, most frequently used 100 words, most frequently used 500 words, most frequently used 1500 words, words included in the Speedwriting Shorthand Vocabulary Builder, average word length, and overall syllabic intensity. SPEEDWRITING Shorthand is the first shorthand system to provide the instructor with computer controlled lesson indexing.

It has been proven over and over again that SPEEDWRITING shorthand provides students with an occupational skill in a one-year high school program or provides a personal notetaking skill in a half-year course. Post-secondary schools often attain their objectives in less time. SPEEDWRITING is a dual system--serving equally well the person who wants a system for college notetaking and the person who wants to use shorthand for a secretarial career.

The opportunity to increase student achievement levels while also reducing dropout and failure rates has made SPEEDWRITING Shorthand a viable alternative for many shorthand instructors.

Historically, symbol shorthand instruction has been characterized by high failure rates, high dropout rates, and low achievement rates. It is not surprising that a decline in the appeal of shorthand has occurred. Selden has reported that a higher percentage of students have failed the dominant shorthand system in this country than any other subject in our nation's secondary schools (1). Lambrecht has stated that "sometimes the proportion of dropouts from the first semester to the last semester of instruction is estimated as high as 50 to 75 percent." (2), (3) And

Wagoner has noted that "in one study of community colleges, as many as 90 percent of all students with no previous training who started the first quarter had dropped out by the close of the second quarter." (4)

Shorthand instructors are rightfully concerned with how current technology will affect their shorthand classes. Adams has indicated that current technology has decreased the need for shorthand writers with extremely high dictation rates. Adams concludes that shorthand teachers should "look for new ways of producing notetaking skills that meet the varied needs of all their students, adding a new dimension to business education." (5)

In assessing how the automated office will accept the business education curriculum, Yacht states: There will be a virtual disappearance of symbolic shorthand systems. If only because it is much easier to learn, therefore attracting a wide range of ability levels, alphabetic shorthand will become increasingly dominant. (6)

It's interesting to note what shorthand teachers are saying since trying SPEEDWRITING. Note what the chairperson of Connetquot Central School District of Long Island, New York stated in a letter to me last spring. "I had a discussion today with my shorthand teachers who were all trained in symbolic shorthand, and not only would we make the same decision to adopt SPEEDWRITING again, we would have made it much sooner than we did. The ease with which students learn the system, and the success they have seems to have reversed our enrollment trends and encouraged students to remain in the course. Our retention rate in shorthand has more than doubled since adopting the system and we are most pleased with the competencies

the students have developed." And from Livonia, Michigan, a report from the head teacher on the four high schools in that district states: "I'm enclosing results of our first year with SPEEDWRITING Shorthand. We are very pleased. SPEEDWRITING certainly filled a very important gap in our curriculum that the dwindling numbers of shorthand students was beginning to cause."

Occasionally, teachers will express some concern to me that they will have difficulty switching from a symbolic system to SPEEDWRITING. That is a very normal concern, but I assure you it is very easy to switch. When I was first introduced to SPEEDWRITING in the 1950's, I was teaching symbolic shorthand at a proprietary school in Chicago, and the owner told me on a Thursday that he had obtained the franchise for SPEEDWRITING and that my first two classes would be coming in a week from Monday. At that time, there was not the wealth of support materials we have today for the learner and instructor. Still, I had no difficulty in switching, and I was so impressed with the way students read with fluency, wrote from the first day, and progressed so rapidly. It was student success that sold me on SPEEDWRITING.

Hear what another teacher says on the subject of changing from one system to another. A teacher at Bennett High School in Buffalo, NY wrote me about her experiences: "As a symbol shorthand teacher for 18 years, I really did not see the merits of adopting a new system, but was I ever wrong! While heading up the pilot program for the city of Buffalo, I feel as if I personally gave birth to a wonderful, exciting new concept that has replaced a dear but tired old friend. My students view SPEEDWRITING

as an enjoyable course rather than a tedious task. I had no trouble switching to this system." (As a footnote to Buffalo's experience, the pilot program was highly successful, and now the entire city of Buffalo adopted SPEEDWRITING.)

Earlier, I mentioned the wealth of support materials available for the learner and instructor. Compare them to anything else on the market. First, there is the Principles Text. There are actually only 36 theory lessons. In addition, there are 6 review/reinforcement lessons, one at the end of each of the six chapters, making 42 lessons in all. The Principles text also has 8 additional speed building and review lessons, if desired, making a total of 50. The system is flexible and adaptable to various time formats.

Language arts are given full attention. Vocabulary building is infused from lesson 8 on; spelling is infused systemiatically from lesson 16 on: beginning with lesson 22, punctuation rules begin and form an integral part of each lesson thereafter. The Workbook may be used as a homework supplement, as a daily classroom activity, and/or as a remedial assistant. In addition to developing new outlines and vocabulary, the nonshorthand elements needed in transcription are heavily emphasized in the workbook. A set of 50 tapes are available for the Principles text. These are "teaching tapes" as well as skill development tapes. There is a Teacher's Resource Manual accompanying the Principles text and a key to the tapes is provided.

For students desiring occupational competency in shorthand, a comprehensive Dictation-Transcription text of 60 lessons provides skill building and dictation/transcription material covering 12 areas of business. A set of correlated tapes, a Teacher's Resource Manual, and a

key to these tapes is provided.

Two other valuable student resources are the SPEEDWRITING Shorthand Vocabulary Builder, with five tapes, and the Student Dictionary.

Some frequently asked questions regarding SPEEDWRITING are:

(1) What kind of speeds can a student get with SPEEDWRITING shorthand?

A student can attain speeds of 120 words per minute and have done so for the past 50 years in private business schools all over the world. However, such speeds are unnecessary for secretarial positions today. Taking dictation at 80 words per minute is the "magic number in today's workplace." It is reasonable to expect that after one semester of instruction, SPEEDWRITING students will write at a sustained speed of 70-80 words per minute. After one year's instruction, it is reasonable to expect that the student will write at a sustained speed of 90-100.

(2) Do businesses accept SPEEDWRITING Shorthand?

Yes, most definitely. SPEEDWRITING is Shorthand! It is an alphabetic form. It is easy to learn, write, and transcribe. Notes do not get "cold." The employer is interested ONLY in the ability to transcribe notes into acceptable documents. Employers do not care in what method of shorthand the notes were taken.

(3) What should teachers do if students (high school) want to continue their education in a private business school or college where symbol shorthand is still taught?

Students should be instructed that after successful completion of SPEEDWRITING Shorthand in high school, there is no need for further instruction in theory. If students choose to go on for further

business training, instruct them that in no way are they to be "started over again" in another system. Students must insist on being placed in a dictation or speedbuilding/transcription class where teachers can handle students with a variety of shorthand theory backgrounds, if they feel they need the additional skill training.

Further, students should be instructed that because they have their SPEEDWRITING Shorthand skill, they may use additional education time to specialize in other areas of business. Make students aware of the many private business schools and colleges who do teach SPEEDWRITING. The number of these schools is increasing rapidly and will continue to do so as they respond to the lead the high schools are taking.

Employers still prefer shorthand trained applicants for jobs. A two-week study of your local classified help-wanted ads will demonstrate that many jobs are listed that state: shorthand a plus, shorthand helpful, shorthand required, shorthand skills preferred. The Department of Labor indicates that for the remainder of this decade, the greatest labor demand in the United States will be for stenographers and secretaries.

Symbolic shorthand has dominated the nation's schools for almost the past hundred years, and shorthand programs are being eliminated across this country--not because there is no need for secretaries with shorthand skill--but because school districts cannot afford to offer courses with such high dropout and failure rates plus lower and lower enrollments.

In order to obtain a marketable skill in symbol shorthand, it is necessary to spend a minimum of two years of study and practice to achieve acceptable results. Today's student is opting not to spend this amount

of time. In fact, today's student, with all the increased academic requirements, a need to work outside of school, and for many other reasons does not have the time, even if they had the desire.

SPEEDWRITING Shorthand has a proven success record for over sixty years. Business educators on all levels are rapidly discovering that SPEEDWRITING Shorthand really works! Students experience success; attrition rates are extremely low; both men and women are attracted to SPEEDWRITING; enrollments are rebuilt; word-of-mouth advertising is very positive; college-bound students attain the great skill of notetaking, plus many in this group find SPEEDWRITING useful on jobs later on; secretaries use SPEEDWRITING as they have for decades, in lucrative careers.

In teaching SPEEDWRITING, there is much more time available to concentrate on the all-important aspects of language arts. SPEEDWRITING shorthand is the best answer to reviving, re-building, and reinforcing the shorthand programs in your schools. Review the available materials, visit schools who are using SPEEDWRITING, and consider seriously whether following tradition ("doing things the way they've always been done," hanging in there with the familiar) is serving your school population advantageously today.

THE FUTURE OF SHORTHAND IS IN YOUR HANDS. WHETHER OR NOT SHORTHAND WILL BE IN THE FUTURE, IS ALSO IN YOUR HANDS.

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